

DOUGLASS MACKEY ALLEGEDLY AIMED TO DEPRESS BLACK TURNOUT IN PENNSYLVANIA

The government and the defense team for Douglass Mackey, the Twitter troll accused of conspiring to convince Hillary Clinton voters to throw away their vote in 2016, are fighting over what evidence will come in at trial, which is currently scheduled to start on March 16.

As I have laid out, campaigns like the one Mackey is alleged to have conducted with people including Anthime “Baked Alaska” Gionet, are the reason why the FBI sends Twitter lists of accounts lying about the place or means of voting: The FBI is trying to stop *systematic* attempts to dupe people out of exercising their right to vote.

Indeed, several times in 2016, Twitter suspended Mackey for lying about the election. “[I]t was because I posted a meme that told Hillary supporters they could text to vote. Lol,” he said in one of the messages the government is seeking to introduce.

In his own filing, Mackey cited the Twitter Files claiming it proves Twitter sometimes gets it wrong when suspending people.

The Mackey case presents some challenging legal questions, and if he is convicted, he’ll presumably appeal on First Amendment grounds.

At issue in the evidentiary dispute are comments Mackey or his alleged co-conspirators made in 2015 and 2016 about how he understood his trolling.

Even in 2015, Mackey understood the power he wielded with his trolling, because of the loyalty of his troll army.

"I have the personality and the ability to convince people now" (DM, Nov. 23, 2015)

"This identity is very powerful. I have something great going on." (DM, Jan 7, 2016)

"I am going to start preparing myself mentally, spiritually, and physically, to be a leader. . . . I never asked or wanted to be a leader, but so many people are asking it of me, so I feel a responsibility" (DM Jan 11, 2016)

"I have like the most loyal army on twitter. I can get anything I want photoshopped in one hour. I have people offering to do web design for me. My Twitter account is just exploding" (DM Jan 28, 2016)

"It's like at any one time there is an army of 100 of my followers ready to swarm." (DM, Aug. 1, 2016)

The government also wants to introduce descriptions of how to deploy that troll army: repetition is key. (Note, it's not clear whether all of these are Mackey, or whether they come from his alleged co-conspirators, not all of whom have been identified.)

"We can hijack hashtags with memes" (DM, Jan 26, 2016)

"It should be done as a coordinated effort. With the goal of trending." (DM, May 9, 2016)

"Please help me trend #InTrumpsAmerica. New hashtag starting now" (DM, May 12, 2016)

"Repetition is key.... Repeat it again and again. I just tweeted it. Memes would also be good." (DM, June 22, 2016)

"Please contribute a tweet to

#KaineAndUnable2016, maybe we can trend it.” (DM, July 23, 2016)

“I would say use fewer hashtags, maybe only use one hashtag, and a simple, short message. Other than that, you’re doing everything right. I will keep retweeting you.” (DM, Oct 5, 2016)

“We’re going to need serious memetics to derail the coming mainstream narrative...get on it, folks” (Tweet, June 6, 2016)

“I am looking for roughly half a dozen photoshop experts who wish to join a team, please respond to this tweet with why you are qualified.” (Tweet, July 1, 2016)

The most interesting detail – particularly given Mackey’s ties to people like Jack Posobiec and, through him, to people like Roger Stone – is how closely Mackey’s understanding of the 2016 presidential race matched the Trump campaign’s.

“Hillary’s team is in a panic because black voter turnout in Ohio and Florida primaries was down 40 percent.” (Tweet, Mar 19, 2016)

“All of these polls assume the electorate will be 52 or 53 percent female, while all data indicates female turnout will be lackluster.” (Tweet, July 25, 2016) 7

“One way to depress turnout is to use meme magic to make not voting for Hillary a cool way for young POCs and progressives to ‘protest.’” (Tweet, July 29, 2016)

“A 25 year old latino progressive will probably never vote for Trump, but we can depress her enough to stay home, or vote for Jill or Gary.” (Tweet, July 29, 2016)

“Very few persuadable voters remain. A lot of what we are doing is just keeping our own team fired up, and trying to demoralize other team.” (Tweet, July 31, 2016)

“Obviously, we can win Pennsylvania. The key is to drive up turnout with non-college whites, and limit black turnout.” (Tweet, Nov 2, 2016)

To be clear: Mackey wouldn't have needed inside information to understand that one way to suppress turnout for Hillary would be to get them to vote for Jill Stein instead of Hillary. That was all openly discussed. Even the claim that “obviously we can win Pennsylvania,” while not the consensus before the election, was embraced by MAGA trolls in advance of the election.

But in August, the prospect of winning Pennsylvania was, according to Rick Gates, “fools gold” because “Trump was unlikely to win there.” And Mackey was part of a network that could have learned of the campaign's decision to go for fools gold.

Even as self-described reverse Russian chauvinist Matt Taibbi continues to aggressively disinform people about the point of FBI's interest in combatting election disinformation, the Mackey trial may make clear how easy it was to match such disinformation efforts to the strategy of the campaign.

Sure, it was just trolling, albeit fairly sophisticated trolling. But its means and manner were perfectly tailored to enhance Trump's campaign strategy.